

member of the Bloc Québécois, I could have the same privileges, I was told I should get in touch with the Joint Chairman of the Committee, Mrs. Dobbie, and that each case would be examined on its own merits.

Mr. Speaker, I have two questions of privilege. One is about the different classes of members we have here: those who are members of the committee and those members in this House who are entitled to follow the proceedings of the committee outside Ottawa, outside the precincts of Parliament, and have their transportation expenses, hotel bills, meals and sundry items all paid for. Other members who, like members the Bloc Québécois, have a different ideology, would have to submit a request for approval by a steering committee of a committee of this House, with a majority government membership, which, I imagine, would judge our case according to our political ideology and perhaps also according to sex, age or any other consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I think a very important privilege and principle is at stake here. My role in this House and in committees of the House of Commons, including the Special Joint Committee, should in no way be dictated or appear to be dictated or influenced by the arbitrary rules of a steering committee controlled by this government.

In this connection, I would ask the Chair and the House of Commons to condemn this practice by the Special Joint Committee and prohibit this entirely arbitrary process, and decide that only members sitting on the committee, or their lawfully appointed replacements, are entitled to the committee's travel expenses. Or otherwise, that all members of this House, without exception, and without being subject to arbitrary decisions, should be allowed to be on these committees and take advantage of free travel. It should also be stated that all members are equal and have the same privileges and should never have to submit to the arbitrary decisions of a steering committee in an administrative matter like this.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the second part of my question of privilege which also involves points of order but is nevertheless a question of privilege. It concerns the legitimacy of expenses thus incurred by the Special Joint Committee on the Government of Canada's proposals for a renewed Canada. The committee, established on June 19, 1991 in this House, by a resolution of this House—you will recall the circumstances—cannot pay the expenses of members who are not members of

### *Privilege*

the committee or replacements on this Special Joint Committee.

On September 24, 1991, the list of members was tabled. Further to a question of privilege that I raised the next day, the Chair ruled on September 27, 1991, that the NDP was entitled to only one member on that committee, Mr. Nystrom, who had been appointed, and that the other two members had not been appointed legally and were to be removed from that list until the NDP provided the Clerk of the House with the names of two members who had the right to be there, and any substitutes for them. The NDP never followed up this ruling the Speaker made on September 27, 1991. Since then, the four members who had been previously designated by the NDP, illegally, continued to sit—which they have the right to do, I agree—but at least three of them also went to Prince Edward Island, all expenses paid from Canadian public funds, with no authorization of any kind given for that purpose. I think that is completely unjust and arbitrary.

Mr. Speaker, in these extremely difficult times for all Canadians, our constituents in Quebec are shocked by such waste of public money. Mr. Speaker, much stricter control must be shown in administering public funds. I ask that the work of the Special Joint Committee be suspended until these administrative and financial issues have been clarified. I ask the Chair to see whether the funds of the House of Commons were actually used to pay the expenses of members who were not entitled to it. You know very well, Mr. Speaker, as I do, and members have always known that it is a well-established principle in Canada that no member can receive money or services from the government or the House of Commons, except his salary which is already provided for, without a special order of the House or a ministerial order. I think that hon. members who accepted travel advances may have unintentionally put themselves—it is not a matter of honesty or dishonesty here—in an illegal situation. It could even affect their ability to sit in this House. Nevertheless, a decision must also be made as to who shall refund to the House of Commons these amounts the committee did not have the authority to pay out and how.

• (1510)

I would ask the Chair to consider very carefully the allegations I just made, based on information obtained from the very members of that committee and from the